**Recommendations for the Greater Seattle Business Association (GSBA)**

**to Enhance the GSBA Website, Integrate Social Media Tools into the Website, and Increase Community Engagement**

by

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**Executive Summary**

The Great Seattle Business Association (GSBA) is a non-profit organization with the following mission:

*To combine business development, leadership and social action to expand economic opportunities for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community and those who support equality for all.*

The GSBA currently has 1,000 members, 300 volunteers, and five full-time employees. Major resources, programs, and activities developed by this organization include: The GSBA Guide and Business Directory, networking events, business development events, a scholarship program that has awarded $2.2 million to 2,500 recipients since 1990, Travel Gay Seattle, and ShopOUT.

Our team reviewed the primary GSBA website (URL <http://www.thegsba.org>) and associated data in Google Analytics, and we have developed recommendations to:

* Enhance the focus, usability, and discoverability of the primary GSBA website to increase visitor traffic to the site.
* Ensure that this website complements and extends the organization’s social media strategy, to increase community engagement and awareness of the GSBA.

Overall, the GSBA website provides a wealth of content to highlight the broad range of services that the organization offers the LGBT community. The strong mission statement provides a clear picture of the vision, mission, and values of the GSBA. These two strengths will provide a solid foundation for website enhancement and increased community engagement.

**Recommendations**

Our recommendations for enhancement fall within the following categories:

* Planning and analysis
* Usability
* Site layout
* Page layout and content
* Graphics, fonts, and color scheme
* Navigation
* Search engine optimization
* Social media integration and community engagement
* Analytics

**Planning and Analysis**

* Focus the website content on the core themes identified in the mission statement: business development, leadership, social action, economic opportunities, and equality for all.
* Determine and target the purpose, audience, needs, and website goals.
* Determine what distinguishes the GSBA websites from other websites that have been developed by similar organizations.

**Usability**

* Simplify the entire site.
* Increase white space around the text to avoid an overly dense, text-heavy experience.
* Structure each page to take advantage of user viewing habits. Place priority information above the fold (content viewable without scrolling) and on the left half of the page.
* Use page templates to create consistent, standardized pages. Ensure that global elements (such as the search box) are placed in a standardized way. For example, users expect to see the search box for the site in the upper right-corner of the site.
* Use alt text for all graphic images and photos for accessibility and to increase discoverability.
* Avoid ads and images that rapidly rotate (that change quickly without any action on the user’s part such as a page refresh). Currently, the rapidly rotating ads create a blinking/flashing effect that may be problematic for some users. Review the [W3C Web Accessibility guidelines](http://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/quickref/#seizure) for this.

A better alternative would be to configure ads and images to rotate only upon page refresh.

* Conduct usability testing to identify potential issues and to test improvements. Create a task list and determine how long it should take for users to accomplish tasks.

**Site Layout**

* Simplify, simplify, simplify. This is a recurring theme in our recommendation.
* The banner area (top area) of the website should contain only the logo and mission statement, no buttons or ads.
* Reduce the amount of space on the page devoted to ads. Ads should be limited to one less visible area of the page.
* Freshen (update) the site layout for a more modern look. Two potential resources for website planning, design, and implementation: *The Unusually Useful Web Book* by June Cohen and *Don’t Make Me Think* by Steve Krug.

**Page Layout and Content**

* Ensure that pages are not overly dense/text-heavy. Consider tabbed content panes to minimize scrolling and to present content economically.
* Remove content that does not align with the mission of the GSBA and the goals of the main GSBA website. For example, consider removing the following unless there is time to make these two pages functional and up-to-date resources.
  + The GSBA Scholarship blog, since it has not been updated since 2009.
  + The GSBA Job Center, since it only lists one job.
* Consider creating Travel Gay Seattle as a separate subsite within its own domain. This would provide an opportunity to provide more focus for the content on [www.thegsba.org](http://www.thegsba.org).
* Add videos. For example, videos could feature GSBA members, their challenges and accomplishments, and end with a call to action (join the GSBA, get involved with the GSBA, attend an event, support a cause).

**Graphics, Fonts, Color Schemes**

* Simplify the home page to feature fewer graphics.
* Choose a maximum of two fonts (one for headings and one for inline content) and stick with them consistently throughout the site.
* Choose commonly used sans-serif fonts for optimum readability and best rendering on a variety of browsers. The [combined font survey results page](http://www.codestyle.org/css/font-family/sampler-CombinedResults.shtml) on the [code style site](http://www.codestyle.org/) provides a list of the most common fonts on both Mac and Windows systems.
* Simplify and modernize the color scheme. Good sites for previewing color schemes are as follows:
  + <http://colorschemer.com>
  + <http://colorsontheweb.com>
  + <http://colorschemedesigner.com>
* Redesign the logo for a cleaner and more modern feel. Keep text on the logo to a minimum. Text can be included in the banner area instead.

**Navigation**

* Add a sitemap.
* Reduce the number of menus and submenus.
* Align menu titles with mission and audience segments. For example, menus might be titled as follows:
  + About
  + Business Development
  + Social Action
  + Scholarships
  + Events
  + Community
  + Contact
* Restrict the number of links on the very bottom of the page and ensure that they do not simply repeat the names of the main menus in the top nav bar. Standard links for the bottom of a site typically are as follows:
  + Sitemap
  + Privacy Policy
  + Contact

**Search Engine Optimization**

* Start keyword efforts by optimizing for “business associations. “ This appears to be a keyword phrase with a relatively high search rate that produces traffic for [www.thegsba.org](http://www.thegsba.org).
* Test keyword conversion rates.
* Ensure that appropriate keywords are distributed where it makes sense in meta tags, headings, content, and alt text. One useful tool for checking meta tags is [SEOCentro](http://www.seocentro.com/tools/search-engines/metatag-analyzer.html).

**Social Media Integration and Community Engagement**

* Provide opportunities for visitors to share information directly from site to their social networks.

Every event, scholarship opportunity, changes to Tax Codes for domestic partners, and so forth listed on the site ought to be sharable directly from the site to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit, Stumbleupon, Del.icio.us, and other social sites.

The more content is shared, the better the GSBA site will also do in SEO rankings.

* Move social media links to a more visible location on the page where visitors are most likely to see and use them.
* Events: Are individuals invited to events through Facebook? Eventbrite? If yes, ensure that event listings include a social sharing button, and encourage visitors to use it.

Also, cull pictures to 10 or 20 of the best for events. Encourage Facebook users to tag themselves in event photos.

* Twitter: Engage more actively with Twitter followers. For example, make sure that followers are thanked for retweets.
* Facebook: Consider ways to encourage and increase interactions. Asking questions, posting polls and contests should increase interaction. Make the posts more personal in nature, rather than just providing coverage. When coverage is provided, ask for feedback from members.
* Blog: Consider moving to a more professional blogging platform.

**Analytics**

* Identify and set up goals and funnels to track in Google Analytics. For example, if one goal of the GBSA is to increase membership, relevant goal and funnels could be set up in Google Analytics to track new members or renewing members.

Other goals to track might be:

* + Social engagement. Specific measures might be:
    - # people sharing GBSA-generated content
    - # Twitter followers
    - # people engaging in conversations about GBSA and relevant issues
    - # influencers (as defined by a Klout score of 40+) engaging in conversations about GBSA and relevant issues
    - # Facebook likes
  + # Scholarship applicants who complete the online scholarship application (available on this page): <http://thegsbascholarship.org/apply.php>.
* Establish baseline measures for goals and funnels now. If the GSBA website is redesigned, evaluate whether the website redesign helped increase the number of new members.

This concludes our recommendations. Thank you for providing our team with the opportunity to review the GSBA website and analytics data. We hope that these recommendations are helpful.

Sincerely,

John Bris, Joshua Friedman, Charlie Mayfield, Nazila Merati, James Phelps, Connie Rock